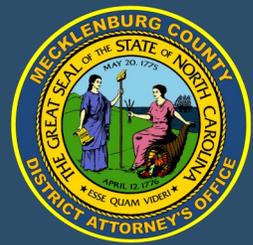




# FROM THE DESK OF DA MERRIWEATHER

The District Attorney's Office is responsible for the prosecution of criminal offenses in Mecklenburg County. Each month, this newsletter provides information about court happenings, initiatives being used to combat crime, the DA's work in the community, and more.



## Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Office

### IN COURT

#### Court operations to expand this month

The courts are still reeling from pandemic-related closures as both victims and defendants await their day in court. Recognizing the need to prevent any further delay to justice, DA Spencer Merriweather has advocated for the expansion of local court operations. Since 2021, only one Superior Court courtroom has been open for felony trials each week. Beginning March 7, a second trial courtroom will open for felony trials. We are grateful for the opportunity to resolve more cases, but we also recognize just how much work we have to do to overcome case backlogs.

Even with just one trial courtroom, we have been busy over the last month. As soon as a jury returned verdicts in a [homicide case](#), the Habitual Felon Team [called a case for trial](#).

And in administrative court, our prosecutors are holding necessary pre-trial hearings and accepting guilty pleas. During a two-week session, the Felony Crimes Team convicted 23 defendants, including Megan Boudreaux, who pled guilty to embezzling about \$229,000 from a Matthews business.

During the week of Feb. 14, the Violent Crimes Team secured 42 guilty pleas. Among them was Shamond Sellers, who pled guilty as charged to kidnapping and attempted armed robbery charges. Sellers held a knife to a woman's throat as he tried to rob her in an uptown Charlotte parking garage.

During the week of Feb. 21, the Special Victims Team convicted 19 defendants. The Special Victims Team and the Habitual Felon Team joined forces in the prosecution of habitual felon Terraries Thomas, who sexually assaulted a woman and committed two unrelated burglaries. He was sentenced to 136-236 months in prison and must register as a sex offender upon his release from prison.

### HISTORY

Mecklenburg County's [Historic Court-house](#), which is home to the District Attorney's Office, opened 94 years ago this month! A grand opening was held on March 10, 1928. In 1920s fashion, it was built with a neo-classical design and adorned with marble walls and a grand staircase. The building is actually the county's fifth courthouse, but it is the oldest one still standing today.



### BAIL REFORM

There is a common misconception that prosecutors set bond amounts for defendants. Bond and other pre-trial conditions of release are set by magistrates and judges. And while DA Merriweather has worked with fellow judicial officials to create more fair bond policies locally, he actually believes that state laws should be changed so that money plays no role in determining someone's pretrial custody status. A defendant accused of a low-level offense should not be kept in custody simply because he cannot afford bail, and a high-risk, violent offender should not be able to buy his way out of custody. [Click here](#) to learn more about bail bonds and DA Merriweather's advocacy for preventative detention.

### FAQ: How do the courts decide the length of one's sentence?

North Carolina operates under "Structured Sentencing," which means the sentence for any crime is determined by a chart created by legislators. The sentencing charts list the offense classes (severity) of crimes and defendants' potential prior record levels. The corresponding box on the chart shows the range of punishments one can receive for any particular crime, including community service, probation or a prison sentence. Each box has three possible ranges: presumptive (the most common), mitigated, and aggravated. Learn more in "[A Citizen's Guide to Structured Sentencing](#)."

Visit [www.charmeckda.com](http://www.charmeckda.com) for the latest news, information about the courts and more. Follow @charmeckda on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

